

Discussions of the Uniqueness of the Sage's Mind-and-Heart in the Horak Debate

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Abstract

The discussions on the uniqueness of the sages' mind-and-heart in the Horak debate of the late Joseon dynasty occurred in regard to two major points of contention. The first regarded the different interpretations of the meaning of weifa 未發, or the original state of the mind, and the second concerned mingde 明德, or the original power of the mind. The Horak debate discussed whether sages and commoners had identical mind-and-heart; the debate should be understood in terms of the serious social inequalities inherent in late Joseon as well as the self-identity of the literati-officials of the time. Han Won-jin claimed that physical endowment in the weifa state had gradations or variations, whereas Yi Gan claimed that, in the weifa state, qi was in its original condition and therefore not subject to gradations or variations.

Keywords: *li, qi, weifa, mingde*, uniqueness of the sage's mind, mind-and-heart and nature

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Introduction

The philosophical debate of the late Joseon era known as the Horak debate resulted from a division of the Yulgok School into the Hoseo and the Nakha Schools.¹ The debate dealt with topics that, although diverse, shared the common themes of identity and difference. There were two notable disputes based on these themes. One was the discussion on whether humans and animals had the same nature, and the other was on whether sages and commoners had the same mind-and-heart.² The former debate grappled with the idea of the nature (*xing* 性) of humans and animals, whereas the latter, the subject of this paper, discussed the nature of the mind-and-heart of sages versus ordinary human beings.

This debate over the mind-and-heart of sages and commoners was based on two major points of contention. The first concerned the original state of the mind, or *weifa* 未發, and the other the fundamental power of the mind, or *mingde* 明德. According to Confucianism, the human mind remains in a tranquil state (*jing* 靜) before it comes into contact with external objects. In *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), the impartial, balanced state of the mind before feelings are aroused (*weifa* 未發) is referred to as *weifa zhi zhong* 未發之中 and that of the harmonious state of the mind after feelings are aroused (*yifa* 已發) as *yiifa zhi he* 已發之和; the two concepts of *zhong* 中 and *he* 和 form a set. The harmonious state of the mind after arousal represents the appropriate emotional balance achieved by the mind in reaction to outside stimuli. The original state of the mind before arousal, on the other hand, represents the calm equilibrium and unity with original nature that is achieved without any conscious effort; as such, it was regarded by later Neo-Confucians as wholly good.

This brings us to the question of whether one can characterize *weifa*, the mind in its original state before contact with outside objects

1. For more information on the Horak debate, refer to Moon (2006).

2. “人物性各異與聖凡心不同兩說，此近日儒家之大議論” (*Byeonggyejeip*, *gwon* 23:33b).

or experiences (before active shifts of consciousness), as being truly good. The mind of a sage can be defined as one that naturally achieves harmony after the arousal of feelings and maintains a state of tranquil equilibrium prior to the arousal of feelings. But can this also be said of the minds of ordinary people? Would the *weifā* state of sages be different from that of ordinary people depending on their temperaments and efforts for moral self-cultivation? Would it be appropriate to say that the *weifā* state of mind is inherently absent in certain types of individuals? These questions became the base of the first major dispute.

The concept of *mingde* 明德 (bright virtue) originates from *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning). Zhu Xi defined it as an agency or subjective force imparted by Heaven that is empty and numinous, equipped with all *li* 理 (principle); based on this *li*, the human mind is able to respond to all events in a proper manner.³ *Ming* 明 (brightness) refers to the attribute of the illuminating mind and *de* 德 refers to the inner ability of the mind. Taken together, *mingde* is a self-aware cognitive power endowed equally upon all humans that illuminates internal and external *li*, thus enabling one to understand and act upon them. At the same time, however, the functional ability of *mingde* depends on the character of the *qi* 氣 (psycho-physical matter) endowed in the individual mind-and-heart, more specifically on the empty and numinous qualities of an individual's *qi*. If so, is it not possible to speak of differences according to one's temperament? Are there not inherent differences between sages and ordinary men? Such questions came to be discussed in conjunction with the closely related problem of *weifā* mentioned above.

In preparation for a deeper exploration of these disputes, the next section provides definitions of the sage (*shengren* 聖人) and the mind-and-heart (*xin* 心).

3. The concept of *mingde* can be found in the following passage in Zhu Xi's *Daxue zhangju* (Commentaries on the *Daxue*): “明德者，人之所得乎天而虛靈不昧，以具衆理而應萬事者也。但爲氣稟所拘，人欲所蔽，則有時而昏。然其本體之明，則有未嘗息者。”

The Sage and the Mind-and-Heart

The Sage (Shengren 聖人)

Neo-Confucianism maintained that “anyone could become a sage through learning” (*xue* 學)⁴ based on the principle that human nature is good. Whereas “the sage” (*shengren* 聖人) originally denoted the king, it eventually came to denote a person embodying humanistic and moral ideals—a vivid symbol of universal human nature—after its usage in *Mengzi* 孟子 (Mencius). Mencius set forth that anyone could become a sage due to the moral nature imparted to all humans. After the religious ages of Buddhism and Taoism, Neo-Confucian scholars interpreted Mencius’s teachings as a message of redemption for humans. The vision of the sage posited by Mencius defines a sage not as a non- or superhuman being, but rather as an individual who is most faithful to his or her true nature and has achieved his or her potential to the fullest.

According to Mencius, there are two ways one can become a sage. One is to be born as one. In the Neo-Confucian worldview, all existing things consist of *li* (principle) and *qi* (material force), or *xing* (original nature) and *qi*; *qi* is the actual method or medium for materializing the dictates (*ming* 命) of *li* or *xing*. Therefore, all human beings act upon the principles inherent within them by means of temperament (*qizhi* 氣質). Humans are distinguished from other beings by a more upright and open form of *qi* as opposed to biased and blocked *qi*. There are distinctions among humans, as some are conferred with clear and pure *qi* while others have turbid and inconsistent *qi*. The degree of clarity determines an individual’s intellectual ability, whereas the degree of purity determines one’s ability to implement principle in practice. A sage is born with the clearest and

4. This is confirmed in the following words of the Korean Neo-Confucian, Yi I (Yulgok, 1536-1584): “初學，先須立志，必以聖人自期，不可有一毫自小退託之念。蓋衆人與聖人，其本性則一也。雖氣質不能無清濁粹駁之異，而苟能真知實踐，去其舊染，而復其性初，則不增毫末，而萬善具足矣。衆人豈可不以聖人自期乎？故孟子道性善，而必稱堯舜以實之曰‘人皆可以爲堯舜，豈欺我哉？’” (*Yulgok jeonseo*, *gwon* 27:3b-4a).

the purest *qi* and is thus able to understand and act upon *li* according to his/her own temperament without conscious effort.

The more strenuous method of becoming a sage is to engage in moral self-cultivation. An individual pursuing this method would overcome deficiencies in temperament through self-cultivation efforts and change accordingly to manifest one's original nature and put the inherent illuminative ability to full use. In order for an ordinary person to become a sage, constant efforts for self-cultivation are necessary. The belief that such efforts will allow an ordinary person to become a sage is based on the premise that the original nature of sages and ordinary people are identical and that one's temperament can be changed, the differences between sages and ordinary people being surmountable and not absolute.

The Mind-and-Heart (Xin 心)

According to Zhu Xi's school of Neo-Confucianism, original nature is endowed to human beings universally and equally while mind-and-heart is exclusive to each individual, forming the basis for the individuality of each human being. The Chinese term for the mind-and-heart, *xin*, originally denoted the physical organ of the heart, and the alternative term, *fangcun* 方寸, denoted the physicalities and individualities inevitably connected to the mind-and-heart. Original nature, as a universal that applies to all beings, is equated with *li*. When the mind-and-heart is juxtaposed with original nature in the phenomenal world, it is understood by some Neo-Confucian scholars to consist exclusively of *qi*, although others have been careful to note that the mind-and-heart consists of both *li* and *qi*.

Some Korean Neo-Confucians believed that the mind-and-heart belongs exclusively to the realm of *qi*. According to them, although the mind-and-heart is made up of *qi* that is far more pure and invigorating than ordinary *qi*, it is nevertheless *qi*; as such, it is not immune to the limitations arising from variation in temperament. From this perspective, the need to distinguish between the mind-and-heart of the sage and that of the ordinary person is evident. Even

though the sage and ordinary person share the same original nature, the *qi* conferred on them differ in degrees of clarity and purity; therefore, they come to possess dissimilar minds. While the notion of original nature upholds the equality of sages and ordinary men, the concept of the mind-and-heart as an element of *qi* implies inequality in the phenomenal realm.

On the other hand, Korean Neo-Confucians who were hesitant to assign the mind-and-heart exclusively to the realm of *qi* reasoned that although the mind-and-heart contains elements of *qi*, it cannot be equivalent to it. The way in which *qi* in the mind-and-heart enacts the dictates of *li* has unique characteristics that distinguish it from physical-physiological *qi*. Within the philosophical scheme of *mingde*, the manner in which the mind-and-heart carries out the calling of *li* exhibits an active self-awareness and conscious implementation of practice. In turn, this self-awareness of the mind-and-heart demonstrates that it has presiding power (*zhuzai* 主宰), or subjective agency (*zhuti* 主體), over the unfolding of events in reality. It is difficult to define the mind-and-heart solely in terms of *qi*. Some scholars further claimed that the mind-and-heart in the *weifa* state was effectively indistinguishable from original nature. The mind-and-heart is mainly characterized by its universality, at least as conceived in the *mingde* and *weifa* states, rather than its individual characteristics. This point is central to the argument that there are no differences between sages and ordinary people in their capacities for illuminative moral cognitive power and in their original state of unaroused mind-and-heart.

The Differences in the Weifa States of Sages and Commoners

In *Zhongyong*, the *weifa* state of the mind-and-heart before feelings are aroused is defined as *zhong* 中 (“in equilibrium”), or in a state of tranquil unity with original nature. In its theoretical conception, the *weifa* state is not one that can be achieved through volitional effort but rather given to human beings naturally, much like the original goodness of human nature. *Weifa* is not a state that is reached through human efforts for self-cultivation, and is tied to the meta-

physical concept of the original nature *xing*. Nevertheless, the *weifa* state is still a psychological reality on the same plane of existence as the *yifa* 已發 state after feelings are aroused, being present amidst the limitations of individual minds as fields of practice. According to this stance, the *weifa* state belongs not to the realm of original nature but to the realm of the mind-and-heart as the medium of the implementation of *li*, and is thus relevant to *qi*. This perspective raises the following questions: should each individual be characterized by the different degrees of clarity and purity of his or her temperament? If so, would not the *weifa* state be manifested differently for sages versus ordinary people?

Yi Gan (Oeam, 1677-1727) and Han Won-jin (Namdang, 1682-1751) engaged in a debate on the nature of the *weifa* state known as the *mibal nonbyeon* 未發論辯.⁵ Whereas Han Won-jin claimed that there were variations or gradations in temperament in the *weifa* state, Yi Gan maintained that *qi* was in its original condition in the *weifa* state and, accordingly, gradations in temperament could not exist. For Yi, any discussion of variations in the quality of *qi* could not pertain to the *weifa* state of the unaroused mind-and-heart.

Yi Gan: The Sameness of the Weifa State in the Mind-and-Heart of Sages and Commoners

Yi Gan described the condition of *qi* in the *weifa* state as follows:

Regardless of whether one is a sage or an ordinary person, the original substance of the mind-and-heart is tranquil and static. The small space of a *cun* 寸 is like still water, or a shining mirror. Accordingly, in its original substance, *qi* possesses ultimate clarity and purity—this is the original state of *qi*. The proper and fitting original substance in equilibrium that is neither partial nor one-sided comes to take its stance, and this is the great origin of all

5. For a detailed account of the development of the debate, refer to Moon (1995) and Jun (1999).

under heaven. If turbid, inconsistent, and even the slightest of uneven qualities remain, it is impossible to speak of the original substance of the water or the mirror, and the *qi* can no longer be regarded as the *qi* in its original condition. There is no case of *li* being pure in its original condition while the *qi* is not in its original pure condition. How could it be that one is speaking abruptly, all of a sudden, of “the impartial and unbiased great origin?”⁶

In the *weifa* state, *qi* is in a pure condition without variations. The *weifa* state refers not only to the mind-and-heart before it interacts with external objects, but also to the unity of the mind-and-heart with original nature, in which the *qi* comprising the mind-and-heart fully and soundly implements the dictates of *li*.⁷ The *qi* that comprises the mind-and-heart in the *weifa* state is in its original condition, and hence possesses a universal identity free from all variations of temperament. In this state of the mind-and-heart, then, there can be no distinction between the sage and the ordinary person.

Based on such an understanding, Yi Gan argued that the mind-and-heart cannot be prescribed by *qi* alone:

It is cursory to claim that the mind-and-heart is temperament. The *qi* of flesh and blood fills the body and forms the realm of temperament. That which consistently commands the body to follow norms and presides over ten thousand changes is the mind-and-heart. This

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6. “無論聖凡，必此心全體寂然不動，方寸之間，如水之止，如鏡之明，則夫所謂清濁粹駁之有萬不齊者，至是一齊於純清至粹<此氣之本然也>，而不偏不倚四亭八當之中體，亦於是乎立，則所謂天下之大本也。彼或濁或駁參差不齊者，苟有一分未齊於純清至粹，則所謂水鏡之體，猝未可語，而氣非本然之氣矣。天下未有氣未純於本然而理獨純於本然者，則所謂不偏不倚之大本，亦安可驟語於是哉？” (*Oeam yugo, gwon* 4:39b-40a). This argument, contained in a letter to Kwon Sang-ha, is a refinement of the one contained in a letter to Han Won-jin (cf. *Oeam yugo, gwon* 7:12b).
7. Yi Gan summarizes this proposition as follows: “理氣同實，心性一致” (“*Li* and *qi* are equally substantial, the mind and the original nature are in unison”) (*Oeam yugo, gwon* 12:22a-b). But for Yi, this was not just a theoretical premise but a goal to be achieved through practical effort (*Oeam yugo, gwon* 13:4b). Thus for Yi Gan, the situation of the unity of mind and the original substance in the *weifa* state were both descriptive and normative. For further discussion on this proposition and the particular characteristics of Yi’s theory of *weifa*, see Moon (2008).

mind-and-heart is what Zhu Xi defined as “outstandingly pure and refreshingly invigorating *qi*. Compared to original nature, it is seemingly delicate, and yet compared to plain *qi* it is freer and more numinous.” Zhu Xi described it as “having ‘empty, numinous and unobscured’ qualities (*xuling bumei* 虛靈不昧) received from heaven,” and also discussed it as “‘empty and bright, penetratingly lucid’ (*xuming dongche* 虛明洞澈), equipped with the entire corpus of *li*.” If so, inside the limited space occupied by an ordinary person, the *qi* of flesh and blood and outer bodily matter are physical residues, and only the *qi* of the mind-and-heart consists of pure and invigorating material. The *qi* of flesh and blood and the outer body are characterized by myriad degrees of purity and clarity, but the mind-and-heart is an essentially illuminating substance that is equal for both the sage and the ordinary person!⁸

Yi Gan opposed equating the mind-and-heart to the temperament of human beings. According to Yi, the mind-and-heart—or the *qi* of the mind-and-heart—presides over the body and is more refined than the *qi* of corporeal vitals (*xueqi* 血氣) or *qi* in the material form (*xingqi* 形氣). The *qi* of the mind-and-heart is also empty and numinous (*xuling* 虛靈) and empty and bright (*xuming* 虛明), being equipped with all *li*.⁹ As such, while the mind-and-heart still contains elements of *qi*, it is seen as an entity closer to original nature or *li* in manifesting a universal identity and applicability. Yi chose to refer to this mind-and-heart as the original mind-and-heart and as *qi* in its original condition.

Yi's position raised questions about whether too much emphasis had been placed on the mind-and-heart and *qi*. Some Korean Neo-

8. “蓋以心謂氣質者，是大綱說也。血肉之氣，充於一身者，夫孰非氣質也。惟綱紀一身，主宰萬變，則特方寸地耳。是朱子所謂，‘氣之精爽，比性則微有迹，比氣則自然又靈’者也，朱子所謂，‘所得乎天，而虛靈不昧’者也，朱子所謂，‘虛明洞澈，而萬理咸備’者也。然則凡人方寸之中，血肉形質之氣，其查滓，而此其精爽乎！血肉形質之氣，其清濁粹駁有萬不齊，而此其本明之體，聖凡之所同然者乎！” (*Oeam yugo*, *gwon* 19b-20a).

9. The *xu* (emptiness) of *xuling* and *xuming* symbolizes being wholly open and accepting of all things without being confined to one's own opinion; *ling* reflects the ability to respond as a subjective agent; and *ming* evokes a conscious cognitive power. *Xuling* is an attribute that applies to *mingde*, and *xuming* is one that applies to the state of *weifafa*. Such distinctions were elucidated by Yun Bong-gu.

Confucian scholars pointed out that this was especially problematic since the numinous and illuminating qualities of the mind-and-heart are granted to all from the start and are not attainable by efforts for self-cultivation. They criticized Yi for elevating the phenomenal mind-and-heart to the level of original nature,¹⁰ and claimed that his theory potentially weakened the need for self-cultivation among ordinary people.

Han Won-jin: The Uniqueness of the Weifa State of the Sage

For this reason, Han Won-jin criticized the views of Yi Gan and posited that the mind-and-heart can be regarded in terms of *qi* alone.

Although the mind-and-heart is not to be separated from original nature and the empty and numinous consciousness (*xuling zhijue* 虛靈知覺) is not to be separated from *li*, the mind-and-heart in its essence is this empty and numinous consciousness found in humans, and hence nothing other than *qi*.¹¹

10. In his “Jungyong mibalseol” (Treatise on the *Weifa* State in the *Zhongyong*)” Kim Mae-sun (Daesan, 1776-1840) evaluated Yi Gan’s theory of the identical nature of the mind of the sage and ordinary person as representative of “a leap in argument that approaches self-deceit” (*Daesanjip, gwon* 9:8a-b). From Yi’s perspective, this is hardly a fair appraisal. Yi regarded the *weifa* state not just as a tranquil condition of the mind and never claimed that ordinary people could reach the pure *weifa* state by making their minds tranquil. To make his point clear, Yi even differentiated between the *weifa* state in equilibrium (*zhong*) and the *weifa* state not in equilibrium (*Oeam yugo, gwon* 12:27a-29a). However, Yi was resolute in his conviction that the *weifa* state was a common metaphysical state endowing all humans with the possibility of achieving equilibrium and that, like original nature, it was not something that could be gained by subsequent efforts for self-cultivation. The problem for the ordinary person is that most people are not able to encounter such a moment in life or continue in that state even if they do encounter it, hence the requisite efforts for moral self-cultivation. Nevertheless, Yi Gan asserted that the ground for such an effort lies in the universal applicability of the metaphysical state of the mind.

11. “然則心雖不離於性，虛靈知覺，雖不離於理，論其本色，則心是覺之在人者，而虛靈知覺，是氣而已矣” (*Nam-dangjip, gwon* 30:13b-14a).

The mind-and-heart, in Han's view, is *qi* and thus not free from the influence of temperament, however empty and numinous. Although the mind-and-heart consists of outstandingly pure and invigorating material that distinguishes it from material or corporeal *qi*, it fundamentally belongs to temperament and is in continuum with it. Therefore, there inevitably exist different levels among individuals even in the original condition of the mind. For the ordinary person, roots of evil exist as a potential force even in the *weifa* state of the mind-and-heart. In such a state, this force is merely inactive.

Han did not claim that the ordinary person cannot experience the *weifa* state or that there are individual differences in the operation of the *weifa* state. According to Han, the *weifa* state is characterized by the existence of only good:

Do the mind-and-heart and original nature display good and evil in the *weifa* state? The *weifa* state of the mind-and-heart is clear, empty and bright, and the desire for material things does not arise within it. It is marked by the existence of only good. Moreover, the unaltered substance of original nature is outstanding to the point that it is in no instance concealed, and one cannot speak of the existence of evil at this juncture. At what point then, can one speak of the nature of physical embodiment (*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性)? This, too, can be conceived as already pertaining to the *weifa* state. Why is this? Although the *weifa* state of the mind-and-heart can be described as clear, empty and bright, there has never been a moment when degrees of purity and clarity, characteristic of the original condition of temperament, failed to exist in it.¹²

Variations in temperament are latent in the *weifa* state of the mind-and-heart. This provides the reasoning for the nature of physical embodiment in the *weifa* state and also accounts for the instability of the *weifa* state of an ordinary person. The hidden levels of tempera-

12. “未發之前，心性有善惡乎？心之未發，湛然虛明，物欲不生，則善而已矣。而性之本體，於此卓然，無所掩蔽，則又何惡之有可言耶？然則氣質之性，何時可言也，亦自未發時，已言之矣，何者？心之未發，雖皆湛然虛明，而其氣稟本色之清濁粹駁者，未嘗不自在矣” (*Namdangjip*, *gwon* 7:1a-18a).

ment and preconditioned evil contribute to the instability of the ordinary person's *weifa* state, making it vulnerable;

The mind-and-heart of an ordinary person is characterized by unevenness in the *qi* of temperament. Therefore, although substantial equilibrium is established in the mind-and-heart during the short instance when *qi* does not work itself up (*yongshi* 用事), this equilibrium is lost once the mind-and-heart becomes darkened and distracted right away. Often, this prevents the mind-and-heart from being alert when it manifests itself. One must preserve this mind-and-heart and change the aspects within it that are unwholesome due to temperament for the preservation of the great foundation, or equilibrium, as well as the fulfillment of the pursued way, or harmony.¹³

Accordingly, the ordinary person may also be able to encounter the *weifa* state. In Han's view, however, the *weifa* state of the ordinary person is unstable and easily vulnerable because the mind-and-heart in the *weifa* state is not immune to influence by variation in temperament. This implies the need for ordinary people to engage in self-cultivation. Efforts for self-cultivation enable commoners to eliminate roots of evil and make changes to one's temperament. Once temperament is altered, the *weifa* state of the commoner's mind-and-heart becomes as firm and stable as that of the sage. Until then, the *weifa* states of the two cannot be equivalent.

Yun Bong-gu: The Theory of Self-Vitalization

Han Won-jin's argument tended to overemphasize gradations in temperament, detracting from an understanding of the unique characteristics of the mind-and-heart. Such an emphasis is contradictory to the meaning of *weifa* itself. Another issue with Han's view is that it weakens the vitality of the mind-and-heart as the agent of self-culti-

13. “衆人之心，以其有氣稟之不齊，故雖於霎時刻氣不用事之際，中體立焉，旋即昏昧散亂，失其中體，故其發常多不中矣。必其常主於敬，以存此心，而盡變其不美之質，然後大本無時不立，而達道無事不行矣。豈可以霎時中體之立，遺責其用之無往不中乎？只自默驗於心，可見矣” (*Namdangjip*, *gwon* 11:4b-5a).

vation while also relegating the universality of the original nature to such an idealistic plane that its realization is actually impossible.¹⁴

In line with Han's theory, Yun Bong-gu (Byeonggye, 1681- 1767) regarded the *qi* of the mind-and-heart to be in continuum with *qi* of the material, corporeal form. However, Yun sought to address the apparent issues in Han's scheme by devising the theory of self-vitalization (*hwalhwaron* 活化論):

The perplexed mind-and-heart of the ordinary person falls short of the clear and pure mind-and-heart of the sage. Nonetheless, the most pure and invigorating component of the commoner's mind-and-heart is originally capable of vitalizing itself (*hwalhwa* 活化), unlike the liver, kidneys, spleen or lungs, whose *qi* are too biased to be able to induce change. If one perceives carefully and makes suitable adaptations, turbid things will become clear, and inconsistent things will become pure; the weak will become strong, and the foolish will become intelligent. This is what is meant by the notion of bringing change to one's temperament.¹⁵

The *qi* of the mind-and-heart, because it is alive, changes. Changes in temperament originate from this variable characteristic of the *qi* of the mind-and-heart. The *qi* of the mind-and-heart is limited by its own degree of clarity or turbidity, but at the same time possesses a dynamic capacity to be vital or to change. For Yun, the *weifa* state represents the moment in which the mind-and-heart undergoes a natural process of vitalization before external contact. Although this moment is temporary, in that moment the *weifa* state of the ordinary person is equal to that of the sage:

My views are the same as yours [Han Won-jin] when it comes to the *qi* of the mind-and-heart, in that you regard its clarity or turbidity as being contingent upon both the original endowment and the

14. See note 10.

15. “蓋衆人相雜之心，雖不及聖人之清粹，而惟其精爽之靈昭，故本自活化，不如肝腎脾肺之氣一於偏而不可變矣。若察之精而操之有方，則濁化爲清，駁變爲粹，柔而能強，愚而必明。所謂變化氣質，於此可言矣” (Byeonggye-jip, gwon 11:20b).

circumstantial endowment. However, there is a point of disagreement in the midst of this consensus In my opinion, the pure and invigorating *qi* originally conferred on the mind-and-heart has gradations of clarity, and the empty and numinous power associated with the mind-and-heart is a function of this pure and invigorating *qi*. I believe that, based on the gradations in clarity of this pure and invigorating *qi*, the empty and numinous power is also not without gradations of its own The empty and numinous power is also subject to variation, based on the clarity of the originally conferred *qi*. But the background of the mind-and-heart, clear or turbid, is originally numinous and incapable of being restricted to one dimension. Therefore it can be said that as long as the *qi* does not work itself up, there exists no turbidity and only clarity in the *weifa* state. The mode of *qi* is clear in all circumstances. But because the original endowment of the commoner is unlike the all-clear and all-beautiful endowment of the sage and does not reach a perfect level, it just remains a brief, momentary state, and one comes to lose it in a short while. The empty and numinous capacity is in fact the mind-and-heart, which is characterized by quietude and encompasses both the *weifa* and *yifa* states. Although the background of the mind-and-heart is different for the sage and the ordinary person, the empty and bright manifestation is hardly distinguishable in the *weifa* state.¹⁶

Yun Bong-gu distinguished the originally endowed condition of the mind-and-heart from the circumstantially endowed actualized condition. Although there is a difference between the sage and the ordinary person in the contents of their original temperaments, the temperament of the ordinary person is also numinous; in the *weifa* state, the ordinary person shares the experiences of a sage, his or her tur-

16. “心之單言氣者，有本稟清濁，又有隨時清濁，此鄙見之與盛說同處，而其中猶有不合者存，何者？愚以為心之精爽之稟，固有清濁，而所謂虛靈，實此精爽之所為也，因清濁之有分數，而虛靈亦不無分數之不同，. . . 虛靈雖因本稟清濁，然有分數，惟其體段，本自靈活，或清或濁，元不局定，故當其未發而不用事之時，則無濁可見而直可以言清矣，其為氣像，一皆湛然，只是本稟不同於聖人之純清純美，又不能變化而同造十分界頭，故此不過霎時氣像而便失之矣。蓋虛靈即心也，具寂感兼未發已發，論其體段，清濁美惡，雖聖凡各異，而至於未發，則其所謂虛明氣像，聖凡殆無不同矣” (*Byeonggyejip*, *gwon* 10:6a-b).

bid *qi* changed into clear *qi*, if only temporarily. In this brief instant of the *weifa* state, even those with evil physical content can effectuate self-change and become a good person through the numinous qualities of his or her temperament. Thus, one cannot talk of gradations of temperament in the *weifa* state. For that state to be continuous, it is necessary to change the physical content of the original endowment. The numinous quality of the original endowment and the concomitant temporary actualization of the *weifa* state illustrate that changes to one's temperament are not impossible, and that it can be realized through self-cultivation.

In summary, Yi Gan referred to the *qi* of the *weifa* state as *qi* in its original form, and he sought to explain the significance of its status as universally good. Han Won-jin thought that Yi was guilty of creating an incorrect dichotomy of the *qi* of the mind-and-heart and material or corporeal *qi*. Han criticized Yi's theory for being a "theory of two minds and two *qi*."¹⁷ Yun Bong-gu did not agree with Yi's dualistic route of elevating the *qi* of the mind-and-heart to the status of *qi* in its original form because he thought that the mind-and-heart was not free from gradations of temperament, yet he also did not agree with Han's theory of *weifa* because he affirmed the dynamic ability of the *qi* of the mind-and-heart to pursue change. Through this explanatory device, Yun tried to explain the universal realm of good in the *weifa* state of the mind without permitting any suspicious dichotomies.

The Controversy over the Uniqueness of the Illuminating Power of the Sage's Mind

Mingde, or the illuminating capacity of the mind, is a concept referring to the innate power or function of the mind. The controversy over illuminating virtues occurred simultaneously to the debate over the state of the mind before the arousal of feelings, and the two

17. *Namdangjip*, *gwon* 11:5a-8b.

debates were closely related. Because Yi Gan emphasized the universal identity of the original mind or the original substance of the mind, he naturally argued that there were no differences between the *mingde* of sages and commoners just as in the case of the *weifa* state. Whereas Han Won-jin first argued that there were differences between the *mingde* of sages and commoners, he later distinguished the mind-and-heart and the *mingde* and came to embrace the sameness of the *mingde* of both sages and commoners.¹⁸ However, Han criticized both stances for not separating the mind-and-heart from the illuminating power of the mind. Han felt that the former stance failed to grasp the universality of *mingde*, and that the latter fell short of grasping the psycho-physical limitations inherent in the mind, recalling the theory of Wang Yangming and Zen Buddhism which asserted that the mind-and-heart is pure. In that regard, Han's critical assessment of the former stance in his theory of *weifa* carried onto his later views. The representative advocate of the theory that differences exist between the *mingde* of sages and commoners was Yun Bong-gu, and the main advocate of the theory of the sameness of the *mingde* of sages and commoners was Yi Jae (Doam, 1680-1746).

Yi Gan and Yi Jae: The Likeness of Mingde

If *weifa* is a term that refers to the original state of the mind as manifested when the mind is tranquil, *mingde* expresses the original power of the mind to cognize and practice *li*. *Mingde* is a fundamental power that humans possess, setting humans apart from all other beings; as such, it is possessed by both sages and commoners alike. Yi Gan said:

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18. “心與明德，固非二物，就其中分別言之，則心即氣也，言心則氣稟在其中，故有善惡，明德此心之光明者也，言明德則只指心之明處，本不拖帶氣稟而言，故不可言善惡。心可以包性言，亦可以對性言，明德只可以包性言，而不可以對性言。可以對性言，故有善惡，只可以包性言，故不可言善惡。此心與明德之有辨也。... 今之論者，心與明德之為一物，所見皆同，而其於心與明德所主則各異，故其主明德之皆同者，并以心為純善，而陷入於釋氏之本心矣。其主心之氣稟不同者，并以明德為有分數，而亦將同歸於荀·楊之言性矣。此蓋不知心與明德雖無二物，而言心則并論氣稟，言明德則不論氣稟，有是不同者，而又於朱先生異同之說，不能詳考而參會之過耳。必反是而求之，然後庶其有會通底消息矣” (*Namdangjip*, *gwon* 30:14a-15a).

Oh, although there isn't any being (animal) in the world that does not have a mind, only the human being is in possession of the original substance of *mingde*. The nature of all things in the world is good, but that all humans can aspire to become the ideal persons like Yao and Shun is not something in which animals can partake. This is what is meant by "the human is precious in the original nature of heaven and earth." What is precious, though, is the mind, not original nature. When we say humans are precious and animals lowly, what we are comparing are their minds. But is that mind only the *qi* of blood and flesh, or is it some originally luminous substance? If this originally luminous substance is really different for sages and commoners, to what standard must we take recourse in order to balance the unevenness in the vital corporeal *qi*? Is the saying that anyone can aspire to become Yao and Shun and the belief that the mind is more precious than myriad things only empty talk? Is it?¹⁹

Yi Gan sought to define the fundamental difference between humans and animals in terms of the original substance of the mind rather than original nature. He identified the difference between individual human beings in terms of the degree to which the mind practiced the dictates of *li*. All humans, without exception, are endowed with the same capacity to recognize and practice the moral imperative based on the cognition of moral precepts, laws and principles. If this were not the case, there would be an inherent limit for human beings to account for moral responsibility.

On a categorical and formal level, the illuminative power of human beings enables them to cognize and practice the dictates of *li*, thus forming the basis for active human moral agency. In that sense, the *mingde* is present in a similar way in all humans.

Yi Jae inherited Yi Gan's argument and said the following:

19. "噫, 天下之物, 莫不有心, 而明德本體, 則惟人之所獨也. 天下之性, 亦莫不善, 而人皆堯舜, 則非物之所與也. 是謂天地之性. 人為貴者, 而所貴非性也, 乃心也. 人貴物賤, 所較者此心, 則抑其心云者, 是只血肉之氣歟? 將謂本明之體歟? 即此本明之體, 聖凡真有不同者, 則彼血氣之不齊者, 終亦以何者為準而可得齊之乎? 人可為堯舜, 心貴於萬物者, 不過為無實之空言矣. 然乎?" (*Oeam yugo*, *gwon* 12:21a-b).

Although the mind is in fact *qi* [when we speak of the mind], we must talk of it as a combination of nature and *qi* in order to get the meaning right. This is why people from olden times did not speak only of *qi* when discussing the mind. If one talks only of the *qi* present in the mind, it is inevitable that there exist differences in the mind of sages and ordinary people because *qi* is different according to each human while *li* is identical in all human beings. But although various forms of *qi* are characterized by differing degrees of clarity, turbidity, purity and incoherence, *qi* is pure and uniform at its origin. Moreover, even if the mind is made up of the most pure and invigorating form of *qi* (*jingshuang* 精爽), one also includes *li* in talking about the mind-and-heart and so one cannot talk of it in terms of *qi* alone. The purity of the original substance of the mind is the same for both sages and ordinary humans. We can see this when our minds are in the *weifa* state.²⁰

The mind gets its name from the mysterious union of *li* and *qi*. Therefore, one must not judge it in terms of *qi* alone without taking into account *li*. However, if we are to analyze the *qi* aspect of the mind, there are two types of *qi*. That *qi* which makes up the original substance of the mind is the material force in its original condition, uniform and unmixed; this is the so-called *mingde* and it is the same for sages and commoners.²¹

Yun Bong-gu: Differences in Mingde

Yun Bong-gu believed that the cognitive capacity of human beings amounted to a natural ability formed due to some highly functional characteristics of *qi*. Yun therefore held that there could be great diversity among people depending on the *qi* endowed to each person

20. “竊謂，心固氣也。然必合性與氣言之，其義乃備。故從古言心，未嘗專以氣單指。然若就其中，單指氣言之，則理一也氣二也。聖人衆人之心，容有不齊者。然氣之爲物，雖有清濁粹駁之不同，其本則湛一而已矣。心又氣之精爽，而又合理而言之，則不可專著一氣字。故其本體之湛然，則聖人衆人一也。於未發時，可見。如何如何” (*Doamjip*, *gwon* 10:13a).

21. “心之爲物，本以妙合理氣者而成名焉，則不可離了這理而獨以氣字斷之也。然若必欲就氣上分析其地頭而言之，則氣亦有二焉，天地本然之氣，純一不雜者，心之本體也，是所謂明德，此則聖人衆人一也” (*Byeonggyejip*, *gwon* 35:41b-42a). This is the view of Yi Jae, cited by Yun Bong-gu.

at birth. One could be excellent or inferior according to psycho-physical endowment, and the expansion or contraction of one's cognitive capacity was also dependant on the degree of one's efforts for moral self-cultivation. Scholars who held similar views to Yun's also argued that there were different degrees or grades to *mingde*.

Yun Bong-gu maintained that although *mingde* was a concept that closely approximated the concepts of original nature and *li*, it was nonetheless connected to the mind; subsequently, Yun argued that *mingde* could only amount to *qi*. If one were to compare sages and commoners in terms of *qi*, there would inevitably be differences between the two types of people. Yun argued the following:

Mingde means bright virtue. Although the virtue is *li*, this *li* rests upon an empty and bright, numinous consciousness, and so it is called *mingde*. The *li* of *mingde* is original nature, and since the mind encompasses this original nature, it is given the overall term "original mind." However, if we speak simply of the mind in itself, it is *qi*. What we recently discussed concerns the mind by itself that is simply made up of *qi*. The sameness or differences in the mind of sages and commoners have to do with variance in psycho-physical endowment. How can one not know that it is not possible to separate the mind and original nature, however foolish and base one may be? Although the *qi* of the mind has pure and turbid elements that are all mixed up together to manifest a myriad of differences, the substantial form of the *qi* of the mind is uniformly empty and numinous, penetrating unimpeded, aptly equipped with *li* and able to respond to all events. The substantial form of the mind is the same within sages and commoners, much like the wonderful efficacy of the ear in hearing and that of the eye in seeing are the same for everyone. This is why, despite the originally empty and numinous *qi*, the purity and turbidity in the endowment of *qi* manifest differences. When the endowed *qi* is activated to respond to events, it manifests both good and evil; people turn out differently according to these differences, so that when it comes to hearing, some ears hear better than others, and when it comes to seeing, some eyes see more brightly than others. The difference is because the actual manifestation of empty and numinous *qi* is different, and the sameness

is because the efficacy of empty and numinous *qi* is the same. If we say that the *qi* of all minds are alike simply because the *qi* of the mind possesses empty and numinous qualities, the differences between sages and commoners would come to be erased, and this does not make sense. However, if we were to say that the empty and numinous qualities of *qi* are all different for everyone due to the differences that exist in the *qi* of the mind, *mingde* will be unable to escape being characterized by differing degrees, and human original nature will be seen as being different for each person.²²

It is clear that Yun Bong-gu refrained from claiming that there were differing gradations or degrees of *mingde*. However, Yun also clearly set out his belief that, in the actual progression of the empty and numinous qualities of the original *qi* in the phenomenal realm, inevitable differences emerged in psycho-physical endowment. Yun was careful to differentiate general ability from deviations in ability of individual human beings. In his view, the need for moral self-cultivation arose from such differences between the sage and the ordinary person. It was in this context that *mingde* was manifested differently in sages and commoners.

The discussions of the uniqueness of the sage's mind within the Horak debate show the kinds of issues that interested Korean Neo-Confucian scholars of the late Joseon dynasty as they dealt with the concept of the human mind (mind-and-heart). Because the mind is the actual locus for cognizing *li* and practicing it in the phenomenal world, it was seen as having a mediating function between *qi* and *li*. If the mind-and-heart were not in inherent possession of *li*, it would not be able to cognize *li* and put it into practice, resulting in the mind-and-

22. “明德，蓋謂明底德也。德者理也。其理寓在虛明靈覺之上，故曰明德也。明德之理，性也，而心實該此性，統言則本心也。然是心也，單言則氣也。近日所論，在於單言氣之心之異同，故其言不得不專在於氣分上。雖蒙陋，豈不知心性之相離不得耶？蓋此心之氣，雖清濁相雜，千百不同，然係是正通上精爽，故其為體段，皆虛靈通澈，能具理應事，此則聖凡無不同，正如耳之靈能聽，目之靈能視之皆同矣。又雖虛靈之皆同，而其虛靈底氣之本稟清濁不同，如上云云。故至於發用而應事，則有善有惡，人人各異，亦如耳聽目視之氣之不同，而至於聽之有聽不聽，視之有明不明，各有異者矣。然則其不同者，虛靈底氣之不同也。其同者，能虛靈之皆同也。... 今以同有此虛靈，而至謂心之氣之皆同，則聖凡無所別而不成道理，以心之氣之不同，而至謂虛靈之能否各異，則明德不免有分數，而人之性各自不同也” (*Byeonggyejip*, *gwon* 11:25a-b).

heart no longer serving as the repository of active power. *li* would be something external to the mind in this instance. On the other hand, if the mind did not have elements of *qi* within it, it would be unable to procure specific temporal efficacy in carrying out the dictates of *li*.

Those who argued that the minds of the sages and ordinary persons were alike, such as Yi Gan and Yi Jae, emphasized the universal identity of all human minds. According to this perspective, although the *weifa* state and *mingde* belong to the realm of *qi*, and, as such, are unable to be identified completely with original nature or *li*, both states were to be seen as approximating the realm of *li*. Yi Gan and Yi Jae posited concepts such as “original *qi*” and “original mind” and came to equate them with *li*, defining them as being necessarily all pure, meaning they were not accidentally so.

On the other hand, those who argued the uniqueness of the sage's mind, such as Han Won-jin and Yun Bong-gu, held that the mind consists only of *qi*, which does not lose its individual specificity or limitations even in the *weifa* and *mingde* states, and is therefore unable to be totally pure. In practice, the mind is only able to procure good momentarily. Han Won-jin claimed that the *weifa* state of the sage and the ordinary person showed differences according to one's inherent psycho-physical endowment or the degree of one's efforts at moral self-cultivation. According to Yun Bong-gu, even though *mingde* can be universal, variations exist in the empty and numinous qualities of *qi*, making possible the illuminative powers of *mingde*. Thus, real differences exist in *mingde* depending on psycho-physical endowment. Yun argued for the possibility of the *qi* of the mind undergoing a process of self-vitalization (*hwalhwa*) through which the psycho-physical endowment could be changed.

Yi Gan made distinctions between the *qi* of the mind and the *qi* of material form and further emphasized original mind and original *qi*, thereby elevating the substance of the mind as approximating original nature. By doing so, Yi sought to confirm the role of human agency in moral action through the subjective autonomy of the mind. On the other hand, Han Won-jin emphasized the continuity of, or connection between, the *qi* of the mind and the *qi* of material form. In doing so,

Han sought to clarify his belief that limitations due to psycho-physical endowment existed in the mind and stress the importance of making efforts to change one's psycho-physical endowment. Yun Bong-gu argued for the continuity of the *qi* of the mind and the *qi* of material form but added another feature: the self-vitalization of the *qi* of the mind. Yun saw the mind as a unique living and moving entity characterized by the ability to change its qualities. Yun attempted to explicate the need and possibility for changes to one's psycho-physical endowment.

According to Neo-Confucian precepts, humans are middle entities that possess both sagely and ordinary attributes just as the mind possesses dualistic or mediating characteristics by straddling both *li* and *qi*. The proposition that all humans can become sages only makes sense if such dual characteristics of humans are also accepted. If one had identical qualities to a sage, there would be no need to make efforts to become a sage. If, on the other hand, one was a completely different being than a sage, there would be no possibility that he or she could become a sage. The question of the minds of sages versus commoners revolves around these conditions of human existence.

Yi Gan and Yi Jae argued that the minds of ordinary people and sages were alike because they wished to confirm that it was possible for all humans to aim for sageliness. However, as such arguments gain strength, the need for moral self-cultivation will be ignored and the danger of aggrandizing subjective achievements will arise. In contrast, Han Won-jin argued that evil exists even in the *weifa* state for ordinary people, and Yun Bong-gu maintained that gradations exist even in the empty and numinous qualities of the *qi* of the mind. Both Han and Yun sought to emphasize the importance of self-cultivation and objective norms by focusing on the differences between the sage and the common person. However, Han's emphasis on the gap between the two types of people carried the danger of weakening the possibility of commoners becoming sages. Yun sought to overcome the difficulties inherent in Han's theory by taking recourse to the theory of self-vitalization of the *qi* of the mind-and-heart.

It is important to note that the duality inherent in the Neo-Confu-

cian theories of the mind were at the forefront of the debate. This duality is characteristic not only of Neo-Confucianism or late Joseon Confucianism but is also present in all theories of self-cultivation. As such, the dual scheme presents a universal philosophical dilemma. Also, it must be noted that those arguing for the differences in the minds of the sage and common people never denied that anyone may become a sage. Likewise, those advocating the likeness of the sage's and the common person's mind never claimed that self-cultivation was unnecessary.

Conclusion: The Horak Debate and Its Significance

Is the human mind the same as animal minds? Are the minds of sages and commoners identical? Why did the Neo-Confucian scholars of the late Joseon period in Korea engage in these questions? The intensity of these debates raises questions that the discourse was more than mere academic disagreements and theoretical discrepancies regarding Neo-Confucian philosophy. For a more accurate understanding, the debate should be analyzed in terms of the attempts by literati-officials to overcome obstacles to social and political renewal in the late Joseon period.

Joseon Korea was a fundamentally unequal society, and the late Joseon period was especially marked by deepening social inequalities. The two debates on the uniqueness of human nature and the uniqueness of the sage's mind—especially the latter—need to be viewed in this context. According to Neo-Confucian discourse, all humans are equal at the level of original nature but unequal in psycho-physical endowment. Literati-officials were seen as those born with excellent psycho-physical endowment or successful in improving their original psycho-physical endowments in order to become sages. These scholar-officials represented people who had moved closer to the ideal human prototype and could thereby act as teachers and rulers of common men and women. Being king was equivalent to being a teacher; because the king could teach, he was also given the

power to rule. In some aspects, teaching was in fact equivalent to ruling. The state was analogous to the school, and the purpose of the state was to help all citizens achieve the human ideal.²³ The *iron* 異論, the discourse advocating the differences between sages' and commoners' minds, mainly focuses on accounting for the inequalities between literati-officials and common people.

Although those advocating the likeness of sages' and commoners' minds admittedly did not question the legitimacy of rule by scholar-officials, the *dongnon* 同論, the discourse advocating the likeness between sages' and commoners' minds, focused on the universal identity of the original substance of the mind, concluding that the gravity of any differences due to differing gradations in the psychophysical endowment were weakened. The *dongnon* contains implications of the ultimate unity and identity without discrimination in the original nature, as well as basic equality among all humans in the original mind.²⁴

In addition, these debates were connected to questioning one's own identity. They were related to the efforts of literati-officials to define their self-identity amidst the transformations, upheavals, and social reconstruction of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Joseon Korea.²⁵ The debates encompass the concerns of those oriented toward the pursuit of morals (the class of the literati-officials) as opposed to concerns of the newly rising working class of producers, oriented toward the pursuit of material desire.

Neo-Confucianism believed in the universal identity of all humans, which implied that anyone could become a sage. The difference between sages and commoners did not arise from differences in nature

23. The preface of *Daxue zhangju* 大學章句 (Detailed Commentary on the Great Learning) by Zhu Xi shows such an aspect of kingship.

24. On the Nakha School's (*dongnon* or "likeness advocates") notion of *cheongi* 天機, or "Heaven-granted framework" and its function in the social ranking system, see Jo (2007).

25. The views on the literati-officials in the "Samin chongnon" section of Yi Jung-hwan's (1690-1756) *Taengniji* (Ecological Guide to Korea) are indicative of such a situation.

but was due to their practical efforts in the phenomenal realm involving the mind and psycho-physical endowment. Of historical significance is the fact that late Joseon Neo-Confucianism made serious attempts to address the differences between humans and other beings as well as between sages and common people.

After war with Japan (1592-1598) and a humiliating defeat in the subsequent war with Qing China (1627, 1636-1637), Korean literati-officials of the Joseon dynasty sought to reestablish their control over society and regain legitimacy by strengthening their Confucian and Neo-Confucian identity. The ruling Westerners' faction (Seoin) regarded the Qing as the main external enemy while nominally accepting Qing suzerainty over Korea. Joseon society was then characterized by increasing disparities between the central area near the capital and the provinces, which led to the formation of corresponding gaps and divisions among literati-officials. The middle class (*jungin* 中人) strengthened and the provincial aristocracy weakened.²⁶ Thus, the convoluted social scene of the country devastated by two wars witnessed the simultaneous phenomena of the reinforcement and obscuring of "differences." Scholars of various philosophical and social standing attempted to defend or dissipate these differences. Another factor contributing to divisions and gaps among social classes was the increase in the domestic production of goods and the subsequent rise in the pursuit of material desires. The combination of these various factors fueled the intense debates within the literati-official class, as Confucian normative issues of sameness and difference began to take on aspects of political power struggles.

In such a changing milieu, literati-officials were pressed to establish their distinct identity as the ruling class and devise new ontological theories of human existence to cope with the rise of a diverse

26. Han Won-jin's attack on Taoists, Buddhists, and all other old and new heterodox schools for not taking into account the importance of differences between things was widely known among his contemporaries, as can be seen in this statement: "自古異端之說, 皆是無分之說也. 老莊齊物, 告子生之謂性, 皆是也. 今之學者, 以人物之性, 謂同具五常, 是人獸無分也. 釋氏曰心善, 而儒者亦曰心善, 是儒釋無分也. 推尊許衡, 以為聖門真儒, . . . 是華夷無分也" (*Nam-dangjip, gwon* 20:18a).

range of human groups. In doing so, they were inevitably met with the following problem: do the ontological attempts to explain the differences that exist in the real world clash with the notion of universal identity inherent in the idea of the sameness of humans and animals, and of sages and commoners? Is it possible to maintain the perspective of universal identity while also searching for ways to account for the actual differences that exist in the phenomenal world? Such questions required literati-officials to engage in a more earnest investigation of *qi*, the ontological principle that explained the phenomenal world.

Literati advocating differences emphasized the various extents of psycho-physical endowment that compose beings. Although they did not deny that changes to one's psycho-physical were possible, they were mainly concerned with delving into the actual differences arising from different degrees of psycho-physical endowment and clearly delineating those differences (Kim 1999, 43-47). In short, they sought to emphasize the existence of differences rather than dissolving those differences. For those belonging to the camp advocating differentiation, it was imperative to emphasize differences among people rather than likeness. Their position is indicative of the fact that the contemporary sociopolitical situation was unfolding in such a way that made vague and dubious the differences between classes, and that this posed a problematic or threatening situation for some literati-officials. For these reasons, among the literati-officials, the *iron* tended to adopt a conservative stance in regard to the changing contours of the contemporary society.

Dongnon scholars, or those advocating likeness, sought to emphasize universal identity among humans. Even when discussing the *qi* composing the phenomenal realm, they argued that, in its original condition, *qi* manifested a universal identity. Although they did not ignore different manifestations of *qi* in the actual phenomenal world, they placed their faith in the universal validity and vitality of the mind in breaking through the obstacles present in the material realm. Their first priority lay in dissolving differences as opposed to establishing and emphasizing differences. The *dongnon* was far more opti-

mistic than the *iron* with regard to the uniformization of society that was occurring. The *dongnon* presented a reinterpretation of the Neo-Confucian ideal of equality fit for a new historical context.

However, it seems that the *dongnon* was marked by obvious limitations due to the restrictions of its theoretical implications regarding the level of individual moral self-cultivation. As a theory of praxis, the *dongnon* proved to be inadequate for providing the impetus to overcome the deepening gaps between social classes. Instead of lending itself to spiritual and operational struggles to surmount social discrimination and inequality, the *dongnon* also let the situation stand and even served to justify it by subscribing to an abstract ideal notion of identity devoid of connection with social reality.

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